BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Rosalina Labrador Wagner

"And we were picking up a lot of pig grass. . . . We took gunny sacks and we went to pick. . . . And we would drag that as much as we can because we had lots of pigs. . . . And we had lots of chickens. . . . And our job was to clean that, you know, the chicken manure. And the pigs, we gave them baths. . . . So we were kept very busy. Then we had to make our own hot water, so we constantly had to pick up firewood, all kind of dead branches. What you find out in the country, it was a completely different world. I don't think I knew what happiness was. I felt secure with my parents, but I know what the difference today. I will never go and live like that again, that's for sure."

Rosalina Wagner, the second of six children, was born April 14, 1924 in Kōloa. Her parents, Andres and Baldomera Labrador, immigrated to Kaua'i from Cebu, Philippines. Andres was a stable man for Kōloa Plantation.

Rosalina spent much of her childhood doing chores around the home. She helped her parents make extra income by baby-sitting and selling her mother's baked goods and homemade beer. Rosalina also attended social box dances where bachelors bid on and paid for gifts brought by Rosalina and other teenaged girls.

Rosalina attended Kōloa School until the eighth grade. Instead of continuing on to high school, she remained in Kōloa to help her parents.

In 1941, she married Barney Wagner. The couple eventually moved to Honolulu, where they now live. They raised two children.

Rosalina's parents, Andres and Baldomera Labrador, were also interviewed for this project.

Tape No. 15-50-1-87

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Rosalina Labrador Wagner (RW)

August 5, 1987

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Chris Planas (CP)

[NOTE: Also present at the interview is RW's sister, Florence Artiago (FA).]

CP: This is an interview with Rose Labrador [Wagner] at her home in Honolulu on August 5, 1987. The interviewer is Chris Planas.

Well, we should start with your name and your date of birth.

RW: My name is Rosalina Labrador Wagner. I was born in Kōloa in April 14, 1924.

CP: Were you born at home?

RW: Yes, a midwife helped my mother.

CP: And you were the second child?

RW: Yes, of six in all.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

CP: Do you know where you were living at that time that you were born?

RW: No.

CP: What's your earliest memories?

RW: My earliest memory is at the [plantation] stable where we lived alone, no neighbors. [RW's father became stable man in 1926.]

CP: Uh huh. And whereabouts was that?

RW: Way out in--they call it "Puhi Camp," but I don't know because there's [another] Puhi in Grove Farm. It's not a camp even, it's the stable where my father took care of the horses for the [Kōloa] Plantation and that's where I can remember.

CP: How old do you think you were at that time?

RW: I think I was about three.

CP: About three years old?

RW: My earliest recollection.

CP: And by that time, you already had a younger brother . . .

RW: Brother, yes. Juanito.

CP: Juanito. Did you grow up speaking English or speaking Visayan?

RW: Visayan. I grew up speaking Visayan until I went to school. It was very difficult to learn a foreign language [i.e., English], but I had good teachers.

CP: What school did you go to?

RW: Kōloa School, up till eighth grade.

CP: Do you remember where that was located?

RW: The same one and the one and only, right there in Kōloa.

CP: The one that now has a library.

RW: Yes, yes. It's not the same building because it got caught in a fire several years ago [in 1973]. And it's fairly new, but the location is still the same.

CP: And your parents both come from Cebu, right?

RW: Yes.

CP: Your parents, could they speak English by the time that you went to school?

RW: They spoke pidgin, some kind of pidgin. It had a mixture of Japanese and Hawaiian and whatever English they pronounced. It was something else.

CP: Do you remember if your parents had very many other friends who were either Filipino . . .

RW: Oh, yes, yes. They had congregated a lot together in the camps. And I remember, there was a taxi called. . . . A Portuguese man, what was his name? Raymond, I think.

CP: Last name, the name is?

RW: Costa. I think his name was Costa. I'm not too sure, but I can

backtrack sometime.

CP: And he ran a taxi?

RW: Yeah, an old Model-T. And we went with my parents. It was always an occasion. But other than that, we were always by ourselves.

CP: The other Filipinos that they congregated with, were they . . .

RW: Only Visayans at that time. There were a few Ilocanos about a half of mile from us, but we weren't as friendly because they didn't communicate as well. But as time went, we communicated. And I remember that as I was getting older.

CP: Did you remember having playmates that were Visayan also?

RW: Only in school. We were brought up alone, strictly alone. We had no neighbors.

CP: Did your parents try and keep you from visiting other children?

RW: Never. But we were always kept home because we lived quite a ways from the nearest neighbor and there was so much to do. Gathering woods, gathering wild vegetables, and just so much to do. Guava--picking up guava and fruits and vegetables, wild ones.

CP: Lot of chores.

RW: Lots of chores. That's the only time I can remember that I thought life was like that. All the camps were segregated. The Portuguese lived in one camp, the Korean, the Chinese, and the Japanese. So we weren't mingling with them until we went to school, most of us. We never did anything wrong because we were told by our parents that my parents would be sent back to the Philippines if we did anything wrong. So we were really afraid to do anything wrong. This is the life I remember.

CP: When they said stuff like that, would that kind of give you a negative image of the Philippines?

RW: I had no idea at that time. But now that I can recall, I was almost frightened to go because this is the only land that I know of and I didn't know what to expect. But as I grew older, I didn't want to go anywhere else.

CP: When they had chores for you to do, what were they? When you went to pick vegetables and fruits, was that just for your own family to eat?

RW: Oh, yes, oh, yes. And they were so in abundance, they were wild. Like those Filipino beans. And the pumpkin and the squash, they almost grew wild. And the tomatoes. And then, too, we would pick up fruits. They had wild guavas and those plums. As far as I can

recall, the sugarcane, we ate a lot.

CP: Do you remember where you went to pick these?

RW: Right close by because we were surrounded with the cane field.

CP: Oh, so they were growing wild in the cane fields?

RW: Yeah. I think the laborers, I'm sure, they were the one that planted those vegetables. At that time, they did not have poison that killed the grass like they do now, the weeds. So we were picking, but we had our own garden. That gave us an outlet, too, I'm sure.

And we were picking up a lot of pig grass. They come like a succulent family, they crawl. They have that in Mexico, they make salads. But we took gunny sacks and we went to pick. The little kids tried, but the older ones, that's the one that did the pulling or the cutting. And we would drag that as much as we can because we had lots of pigs. I think, between four and six, to be sold and for our livelihood.

And we had lots of chickens. In fact, it was amazing when I can remember. They were living up in our ironwood tree. We were surrounded with ironwood trees, and they lived up there. We had a small area for the chicken coops where they would sleep. And our job was to clean that, you know, the chicken manure. And the pigs, we gave them baths.

So we were kept very busy. Then we had to make our own hot water, so we constantly had to pick up firewood, all kind of dead branches. What you find out in the country, it was a completely different world. I don't think I knew what happiness was. I felt secure with my parents, but I know what the difference today. I will never go and live like that again, that's for sure.

CP: So pretty much, your whole life, you lived by the stable?

RW: Yes, until I got married [in 1941].

CP: When you went to school, how far was it to walk?

RW: Oh, God, we walked a good two miles. Two miles and a half, I'm sure. Barefooted, rain or shine. And I wasn't a healthy child. I had to go to the doctor every Monday to have some kind of vitamin shots. I was deathly scared of the doctor, too.

CP: Why was that?

RW: I was underweight and I was undernourished, it seemed. Or I was sickly, a sickly child. My parents didn't explain to me what happened to me because they never went to the doctor. All I can remember, I was constantly having diarrhea, all kind of hour,

whether it was night and day. I remember, once, they bathed me in such cold water that I dreaded even to have diarrhea, but it just came out. No control.

CP: How long did that last?

RW: I think for several months. I don't know what kind of medication they gave me, but I never remembered going to a doctor. The first time I went to the doctor was when I had my tonsils removed, and I think I was about five years old. Yeah, just about that age. Five or six.

CP: When you started to go to school, you were about five?

RW: No, six. We did not have a kindergarten then, so six was our awakening that there was life after all in another world and to learn. That's where I learned to brush my teeth. We never brushed. We never had a toothbrush [before] in our life. And even then, my parents said it was too expensive buying them. So it was a very different world for me.

CP: Your parents, they didn't brush their teeth or . . .

RW: They never even did. They never brushed their teeth. That's why my father still has all his teeth, but he's not so . . .

(RW's sister Florence Artiago arrives. Taping stops, then resumes.)

FA: And then, when I was in third grade, I knew my father couldn't afford. I just applied for free dentistry.

RW: Me, too.

FA: And they didn't know I went. During school hour, they used to send us someplace, about walking distance from Kōloa School to . . .

RW: His office.

FA: What is the community center [i.e., Kōloa Civic Center] now used to be the Kōloa Police Station. They set up a county dental [clinic] for the children that couldn't afford. Whether my father could afford or not, I wanted my teeth checked.

RW: They didn't care. They didn't know. They didn't know any better. I told you, illiterate, so what we know . . .

FA: Not only that. I think their main objective in life was to make money. That was it. As far as the welfare of the children . . .

RW: It was different, yeah.

FA: . . . that was no concern of theirs, really.

RW: And we better not cry, we're going to get spanked more. That was their philosophy in life.

FA: And we didn't ask, of course. We know we couldn't.

RW: We had to show plenty respect, Chris. That was the way we were trained. So this is why it's so difficult now to rekindle all the past, you know. My sister didn't struggle as much as I did. I wanted out of there when I had sense.

FA: But they did have a hard life. Everybody did. Everybody was in the same situation.

RW: And they were in constant fear. You know, the White people was the one overall that [called] the shots. We had to walk on eggshells to be very careful not to do things wrong.

CP: You know, when you went to school, what was it like? You know, the first few weeks of school for you?

RW: I thought it was interesting. We brought our own lunch. We had our own lunch.

FA: Bentō. Aluminum bentō.

RW: Aluminum can. And my mother would put lunch--rice, and then whatever, eggs, whatever was there. Mostly sausage, we had, those . . .

FA: Vienna sausage or . . .

RW: No, chorizo, my days, those dry Spanish sausage that came in a can. And we were allowed to take one. But I was amazed to see my Japanese friends. They were not my friends because they were a prejudiced bunch, yeah. But I used to watch them eat. They had rice and fried onion or fried potatoes, and that was it. But Filipino was little bit more interesting because some parents made them bring fish and the sausage and whatever they had.

FA: But no vegetables. We never had . . .

RW: No vegetables. We never had vegetables, but we ate when we were home that night some kind of soupy vegetable, you know, like those Filipino beans. And they always planted eggplant and those kalamunggay. What is that sauce we use for. . . . Radish, horseradish. That kalamunggay is in that family, horseradish. Well, anyhow, that was our staple food. We never had bread. We ate rice. Three meals a day, rice.

FA: Soda crackers.

RW: So luckily, we had wild fruits and all that sugarcane.

FA: All the way, when had all the guavas.

RW: Yeah, we ate guavas, and then we'd have constipation.

CP: Oh, how come?

RW: Because we ate the seed. The seed of the guava, it binds you. So had we ate only the pulp or skin, we would have been fine. But the seed was delicious. And those days, our teeth was good, so we just ate. And plum, we would get our mouths so purple, dark purple, like, yeah? It was something else.

FA: What kind of plum was that?

RW: They had it all over.

FA: They're wild. Very plain.

RW: They're wild. They're tiny. And they're sour. God forbid, I will never eat them now.

FA: We used to put salt in a paper bag and we used to shake it and we ate it up. (Chuckles)

RW: Very sour. So that was our fun. We had no playmates.

FA: We weren't allowed.

RW: We weren't allowed to mingle out.

CP: How was it for you when you went to school? You couldn't understand English, yeah?

RW: We had to learn. See, our teacher was amazing. "This is what this is. Everybody." Then we would say it, "That is. . . . " Then, when we started the A, my days was different from her. "This is A. A, Ah." So we would say, "A, Ah." "B, Buh." So that's how we learned. It's beautiful compared to the teachings today.

FA: In other words, it wasn't phonic.

RW: We had no phonetics.

FA: Yeah, it wasn't phonetics. It was just sight.

RW: Yeah, reading.

FA: It was memory of sight and read.

RW: It was interesting how those old teachers used to--well, of course, at those days, they were still young. That's the way the basics were taught. And we learned it.

CP: How long did it take for you to learn English? Do you remember?

RW: Very fast for me. Because every day I looked forward to going. But I used to hate it in the end, because when it was cold and rainy, we would get wet and go to school, looking terrible and we just had to sit. Kids would make fun of us and we dried out by ourselves. That's how it was.

FA: You know where my mother lives? Even further, we had to walk to school . . .

RW: Yeah, we lived even further [from where RW's parents live presently, in New Mill Camp]. I wanted you to see where we used to live. We were isolated completely. See, that's where the mill is now, and we had to go in about almost . . .

FA: Another half a mile. [The stable was located approximately one-half mile beyond Kōloa Mill.]

RW: That's far, you know, on a dirt road with big rocks. And try walking barefooted, especially when you just get up.

FA: In the summertime, the sun . . .

RW: We would look so terribly black from the heat, the sun.

FA: And the feet, the tar . . .

RW: We had thick soles. Would you believe walking on that hot tar as far as the sugar mill? The road ended there. Then all the way to school.

FA: I did. From first grade to eighth grade, I walked to and from school . . .

RW: Yeah, we all walked. It's only high school that she had transportation. Things were very difficult.

FA: And we had to pay for our transportation to high school. There was no such thing as state-provided transportation.

RW: We came up in rather difficult times, and we thought that was how life was. How wrong we were.

CP: What kind of friends did you have in school?

RW: Filipino only. We were not well liked, the Filipinos. My days. My sister, different . . .

FA: When I grew up, I did have Japanese friends.

CP: So your friends were mostly Filipinos?

RW: Yes.

CP: You must have had something like school activities where you were involved with the other. . . .

RW: Well, only during school time because my parents say, "No time, no time. There's lot of chores to do."

FA: And in those days, they did not have any sports participation for women, anyway. Even in high school, you had only boys and their football, basketball, and baseball.

RW: It was worse for me. I had nothing. There was no activities for us. It was much better years later. [Note: Florence Artiago was born in 1932; RW was born in 1924.]

FA: Only what, school plays?

RW: Yeah, I had participated in one school play, but then that was when I was already in seventh or eighth grade. And that was only that one time I participated. Took two programs, one on the Hawaiian program and one on the tumbling act. So, it was interesting.

FA: Every other year or every year, Kōloa School presented an operetta. And that involved the whole school, the students were handpicked to participate in that operetta. And the whole community would come when it was presented. You know, they had tickets. That was the only kind of activity, really.

RW: Things got different as I got older. So what else you want to know about when I was young?

CP: [So] your routine [was that] you would go to school in the morning. . . .

RW: And chores, the minute we got home. And we better not dilly-dally or we get the spanking of our life with a belt.

CP: What would you do when you came home?

RW: We got undressed and we had to do whatever. Cleaning up that manures. And picking up, picking up. I don't remember having snack like the kids today. We had to go directly.

FA: The garden, for one, my father had.

RW: The boys did the chore, and then if we needed pig grass, well, that was the high priority. We had to go and pick up pig grass. So, along the way, we would pick up wild fruits and eat it. And so, naturally, we didn't think of being hungry. Sometimes we would steal things from my mother's pantry. I didn't; my brothers did at that time. But how my mother used to know, they used to put the thing and it would leak in the pocket.

CP: Oh, what was that?

RW: Adobo that they cooked in large quantity and it's soaked in the vinegar and salt, you know. So, that used to be a good snack to steal.

FA: Preservative for the meat because in those days they didn't have refrigerator.

RW: And then, of course, the vienna sausage was easy to take and put (chuckles). And they would open it up and eat, but I didn't dare. I did not dare. My brothers, the younger ones are more daring, especially Perfecto. He was more daring, so he took. But I didn't dare.

CP: What did your mother do when she found out that they stole stuff?

RW: Spank, of course. And then, not only one would get involved--all of us, for not watching out. If one was at fault, every one of us had [a spanking], including my sister, the baby. That's not a picnic, growing up like that. But we thought that was the way life was. We didn't know any better, really.

CP: Who was the disciplinarian in the family, your father or your mother?

RW: Both of them. But mostly, my mother would depend on my father. But she did her share.

CP: Why was the pig grass so high a priority for the chores?

RW: That's their [the pigs'] food. They made. They cooked that with barley in a big drum container. And every day, they would take some and mix with barley and put it in the trough.

FA: Because they had always, they had two or three pigs.

CP: And then, you would eat the pigs, too, or you'd sell them?

RW: Most of it was sold. Because my mother made money every different way she could. Until today, she still like money. So I don't know what money can do . . .

FA: My bachelor brother wanted me to continue on to make the Filipino cake. And I says, "No way am I going to get involved." Because, I says, "My priority here is not to make money. It's to take care of them." If I wanted to--I love baking--I'd rather open my own bakery shop where I can understand what I'm making. It's too difficult to make those kind of [Filipino] cakes.

RW: And they had no recipe, anyway.

FA: The hotels order those things and they pay good money for it, but

that's something I'm not comfortable making. Why should I? Because it involves too many people.

RW: And then, when we were growing up, of course, we found that American cookies and their food was even tastier. So we liked that better, especially the lemon meringue pie.

FA: Oh, we used to always--my other sister and I always . . .

RW: Baked.

FA: . . . used to experiment. Cookies and pies.

CP: You were saying that the hotels used to order these things?

RW: Oh, recently. Not in my days.

FA: At the hotels are the tourists. They do order ethnic pastries and stuff. I must say that my mom, her Filipino cake, that particular one, the biko, is very tasty. Because I've tasted other people's. Hers has a certain taste to it.

RW: There's an art that she uses.

FA: I don't even know how to make her cake.

RW: But what now, he wants to know about my early recollection of Kōloa--of that stable where we lived. I don't even know what the name of that camp.

FA: It really doesn't [have a name]. It was only the stable.

RW: It was just called "the stable." And we were isolated there half a mile from civilization.

FA: We were the only ones there. They had to make a special--the water pipe, the electricity, we had a special . . .

RW: Mm hmm. And then, we had an outhouse there.

CP: The horses were kept there [at the stable]?

RW: Yes. It was a pretty big stable, like that. And several stalls. And right in the center there was a train track. A rail track, where they pushed those little cars to feed barley and those cane tops [to the horses].

CP: Now, who would use those horses?

RW: The working people, the big bosses, and the [cane] planters. The donkeys were for the planters [to help plant], the seedlings. The

big horses, they're called now the Clydesdale, I think.

FA: And the work horses were used . . .

RW: They hauled the cane.

FA: . . . during those days, the horses, that was their main work. You know, instead of trucks, they had to use [horses].

RW: Yeah, those big, big horses, I remember that. I don't know what kind--Clydesdale, I think.

FA: Yeah, they used those retractable, portable tracks to go from the main track to the fields. And from there, the horses used to have to pull those cane cars towards the middle of the cane fields. Of course, the menfolks used to cut the cane and they used to stack it into the sugar cars. And when the cars were filled, maybe, I would say, about five, ten of 'em or maybe less, then the horses would have to pull those cars to the main track, and then the trains would . . .

RW: Haul them.

FA: . . . to the mill.

RW: So many of that little containers, then they would haul about--if I can remember--about twenty at a time. And the horses, the beautiful ones, the big bosses used to use. And they consisted of Portuguese people, if they had brains, and the German, mostly German and Polish people, I remember so well now.

FA: What's his name? Mr. [William] Kuhlman.

RW: Yeah, that's German.

FA: He was a mean man.

RW: Kuhlman was never friendly.

CP: And none of these people lived near the stables?

RW: None.

FA: Mr. Kuhlman lived close to the [main] stable, the one in Kōloa. There was another stable . . .

RW: There was a greater, bigger one. Much, much bigger one. And ours was just half of that. [According to interviewees, there were three stables serving Kōloa: one was the main stable located near Spanish Camp, run by William Kuhlman; another near the Kōloa Mill, where RW and family lived; and a third near the present county cemetery.]

FA: In fact, Mr. Kuhlman's house is not there anymore, it got burnt

down, but part of his house is still there as you walk to Waitā.

CP: Do you remember your father or any of you ever trying to ride any of the horses?

RW: He had a horse named Mary. She was partially blind in one eye. And that's the horse that, once in a while, we'd have a treat. The only place, of course, he would let us ride is around the stable, nowhere else.

FA: It was once that he really. . . . (Chuckles) we went out. She [RW] was already married. My sister that lives in Texas, my brother that's right above me, and myself. He saddled three horses at one time and he let us ride. And we went all over the place. We rode it. That's the last time I remember ever--first and last time--I ever rode a horse. And my horse, couple days afterwards, the horse that I rode, got lame and they had to kill 'em.

But he [father] had his own saddle. He had his own whip.

RW: Yeah. It was different in her [FA's] days. My days, we weren't allowed because my father took full responsibilities.

FA: But we begged him that one day. I think he felt sorry for us.

RW: But that was years after I left. So this was what I missed. I didn't know any better, but today, I do. I wish I could have the opportunity . . .

FA: It had to be in 1941 because it was before the war and she [RW] had just gotten married and my [other] sister was still there. Because my other sister left in '42. So it had to be in 1941 before the war. Because she [RW]--you weren't there. And he did make us ride.

CP: Rose, can you tell me more about going to school?

RW: Oh, you're interested in that? I remember it vividly. I liked school because I could learn, but then I have to come home immediately right after school. In fact, running, because my mother was so busy with the kids. She had already starting to get children. And then, when she would just start getting pregnant, she would be awfully ill. You know, that morning sickness. And she had to have someone to help in the kitchen, and then take care that, whoever is around.

CP: Do you remember what it was like when you first went to high school?

RW: I have never gone to high school, Chris. The only one that went to high school is Florence. I went to school later, much, much later after the . . .

CP: Oh, so when did you stop going to school?

RW: Just till eighth grade, like I said.

FA: She went to vocational school, though.

RW: I went to sewing, vocational. But even then, I did not like it because I'm not for vocational school type. I wanted something different.

CP: So you went to school until the eighth grade and then what happened?

RW: My mother then had full swing of her business. So I was her partner. I was her chauffeur, her helper, her everything.

CP: What kind of business was that?

RW: Her delicacies, Filipino delicacies. And then, of course, at night, we sold beer--I sold the beer. Well, they went to bed early. The people from the camp would walk down and buy beer.

CP: Can you tell me about the baking?

RW: Yes, mostly baking in those makeshift oven. They had a pot that was round. They used the stove. And then, they had charcoal in another place that they constantly had to keep blowing and fanning to get the intense heat, I remember that. And then, she had those round ones. That was called, the Visayan style, the bibingka. It was baked in that. So it was hard, hard work. Before anything else, they had to get, of course, lot of coconut. That's the main thing. And lots of banana leaves, which was a main thing. And then, they had sweet potatoes which they shredded. I don't know what kind of shredder they had then. And the bananas, they fried it, and those potatoes, they shredded. That was in abundance. We went to sell that almost every week out to the camps.

CP: And how would you go about this?

RW: Well, in the beginning, we tried to sell in that half a mile radius to the single men, the Ilocanos. And at that time, a big bunch would be sold for twenty-five cents. And then, of course, I let them charge it, and then I put it in the book, who and who bought. And then, once a month, I'd go and collect. That was our livelihood.

CP: Did you go to them in the field or did you go to their house?

RW: In their house, as soon as they got home. We knew. The sugar mill would blow the whistle, and we would go there.

CP: Oh, so what time of the day would that be about?

RW: Any time after 4:00. At that time, the whistle blew 4:00 or 3:30.

FA: No, not 3:30.

RW: Four [o'clock], I think. Because those days, they didn't have such thing as eight hours. They worked--in fact, when my father started working, he worked before the sun came out and came home very dark at night.

CP: How much money would you make in a week?

RW: I swear to God it was between five and ten dollars. And that was big money. Because twenty-five cents per person would accumulate. Then I would go again the following week. They [i.e., laborers] used to hate me, you know, because they, too, were trying to make money and save. And I remember their food consisted of the vegetable, rice and that fish sauce that they bought in the store. That was their food.

CP: But they must have liked it if they kept buying, huh?

RW: Well, mostly feeling sorry for me, I think.

FA: She's a young lady. (Chuckles)

RW: My mother's baked goods were good. They were delicious. But they felt sorry for me, probably, because I was a little kid that dragged that basket around and got the little book and got their name.

CP: Were you selling to families or to bachelors?

RW: Mostly bachelors. Families couldn't be bothered. They, too, were busy trying to make a livelihood. And to them, that was a waste. If you gave them, they would take it and eat it, that's for sure, but they wouldn't buy. The first thing is, they couldn't afford. But those men, bachelors, I used to beg them to buy. They'd say, "Pesty kid. Come around here, pester." That's how I learned how to speak Ilocano. I didn't speak it fluently like I do Visayan, but I picked up on that. Constant hearing. They used to feel sorry for me. That's mostly what it was.

CP: So you used to carry the baked goods around in the basket?

RW: Yes. In the beginning, of course, my mother initiated all that. I remember her getting bit by a dog. I felt so sorry for her because that's how it was. You went around and you didn't know who had dogs those days. She got bit on her foot and she cried because I know it was painful. But we kept on going. And she didn't get lockjaw from that bite.

FA: In Hawai'i there is no . . .

RW: Rabies.

FA: . . . rabies. Not yet, anyway. That's why they have that ninety-day quarantine.

CP: So, initially, your mom would go out with you?

RW: Yeah. Then when I got older, maybe about ten, eleven, then she'd send me to go to that camp. My big brother, my oldest brother, would sometimes carry that heavy thing for me. And he wasn't to be depended on. He just dragged on. But we had to be sure we did our work and then come straight home. We couldn't dilly-dally. Because she needed me home to cook. Help cook, help clean, help with the babies, help give them a bath. 'Cause the boys were watering the garden. So that's about how my life was.

CP: Now, with the baking thing, how long did that last? Do you remember?

RW: Until. . . .

FA: She got married [in April 1941].

RW: No, it continued until the war [World War II].

FA: It was not as active as when you were there.

RW: She went with Phidelina, I'm sure. But she always had that ambition. Actually, she didn't want to, but she took in laundry after that. And they all got involved, stringing them socks during the war. [With a needle and string, RW's mother would string the socks of each worker together to avoid mixing them up.] And hanging and picking up those clothes. And she did the ironing.

FA: But I made it very clear when I was about the age to be selling cakes . . .

RW: She didn't want.

FA: I put my foot down.

RW: Nobody wanted.

FA: I says, "I'm not going to."

RW: I was the only one.

FA: I says, "If you want me to make extra money, I rather scrub floors than go from house to house."

RW: I was the only one that did that. So when I got married, she [mother] got taken ill because she missed her right-hand gal, girl Friday, whatever.

CP: Did you help her to bake?

RW: No, she didn't want---the only one that helped her was my father. To her, we would be a hindrance to her. She had her special way of

doing things. All I did was take care whatever cooking, or cleaning up, and take care of the little ones, mostly.

CP: You didn't really have an oven?

RW: She had.

CP: She had an oven?

RW: Not those big---it was a square thing you put on top the kerosene stove.

FA: It's still at home. She still has one. And she would to this very day still bake her goods in there, except that I did it in an oven.

RW: She's deathly scared of these modified ovens.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

RW: . . . like the Portuguese, they had their own brick [ovens]. I don't think my sister remember that, those big brick ovens. No. And I don't think Filipino things would work well with that because . . .

FA: Probably would, but they did not know how. Because Chang Fook [Kee], that's what Ah Choy [a.k.a. Walter Chang] said, they had a brick . . .

RW: Oven in the back? Well, my parents had mostly deep-fried things. And the lard she used was from the pig's fatback. How you call that? The slab of fat. They would deep-fry it and keep the skin and the fat to cook with their beans, you know, the munggo beans. And then, the fat was kept in a can. And that's what they used for frying those round kaskaron. We call them inomol. Kaskaron, I think, is Ilocano. And we called it inomol, the round thing which you put it through the bamboo sticks. And we had those deep-fried bananas and those deep-fried sweet potatoes. And those binangkal where you have those bread flour, you roll it in sesame seeds. And that came much later than my days. Of course, the bodbod [in Tagalog, suman], it's wrapped up in banana leaf. That was steamed for several hours in a can in a open fire.

So that was how they made their cooking. It was pretty cheap and they made some money out of that style of cooking. Because the wood was there and those big cans were there. So that's the way how my mother made mostly. The oven came much later. But mostly it was cooked in big cans, vats, or whatever, and deep-fried in a big pan. They would put it on the open fire and they would. . . . It was amazing how they would have a long stick to pick up their [pastries]

with the big spoon. So that's about it, I remember.

CP: I guess that took up a lot of your afternoons after a while.

RW: I could not get a normal life. I never had time for my. . . . Nothing. I better not ask, because I'm going to get it.

FA: And some Saturday nights, maybe every Saturday night if I remember correctly, they had what they call the social box.

RW: Or partner dance.

CP: Every Saturday night?

RW: Not always. But often, because they would have 'em in like different--like Kōloa, Kalāheo, 'Ele'ele, Lāwa'i, and Līhu'e, Hanamā'ulu, all that.

CP: And you went to all those?

RW: Yeah. And my father and mother would. Mostly my father or a chaperone would take us.

CP: What would you have to do?

RW: Dance with them. Or if we had to have box, I would have my mother fix for me. But most of the time, she didn't want to be bothered with it. She would tell me, "Go and buy something." So I'd buy a box of candy and wrap it up, you know. And they would auction it.

CP: Was this something that you wanted to go to?

RW: No, I did not. But I had to, otherwise those men would boycott our product.

CP: Oh, really?

RW: They would not buy. Yeah, they were like that. Already, I didn't know. But see, we had to use our. . . . How do you say that? We had to play ball, in other words. That is as far as I can remember. Much as I hated to go, it was a good outlet. The menfolks were nice. They were all nice and respected all of us. We don't have goings-on like you do now. But it was nice.

CP: How many women would participate in that . . .

RW: Several. Several young ladies would. I'd say a good twenty-five to forty girls. We were young.

CP: Really? And how many men would be there?

RW: Well, [from] all over, they would come. The whole camp.

FA: There were more bachelors than families.

RW: Yes, really.

FA: Really. I still remember that they were all . . .

RW: Mostly bachelors. And they were hungry for that kind of socialization, too.

CP: I'm trying to understand what the proportion would be. If there was twenty-five women there, you know, how many men, you think, there would be there?

RW: I'd say, fifty.

CP: That's about at least two to one?

FA: Two to one.

RW: But let me tell you, our age were no respect. We were between ten and fifteen at that time. Nobody were of age.

FA: And the menfolks were already in their . . .

RW: In their early twenties.

FA: Early twenties or early thirties, already.

CP: How old were you when you first started going to these social boxes?

RW: Thirteen. Twelve or thirteen. I was pretty big for my size. And they were hungry for companionship like. But all the parents were there, you see. It wasn't anything that scandalous and out of the way. But I don't think the kids would do that.

FA: That, I didn't do either. At my age, a teenager, it was still going strong. And I refused. I told my mother, "I'm not about to do those things for you." I says, "There's no need for it."

RW: I had to be very careful not to offend them because they'd boycott my mother's [business]. Several times, we did that--go on to another dance. And then, when we went back to that camp, instead of that. . . . It happened one Saturday, this camp had a dance function, and then this [other] camp had. And we prefer going to this one here. And then, when they found out that I went to that--they had spies for some reason--they will not buy any of our cakes.

CP: That was the main reason you went?

RW: Yeah. And to help my mother, of course. I thought that was life. I didn't know any better, remember that.

CP: So when you took this box, did everyone take a food item in the box? Nobody would bring something else like a sweater or a shirt?

RW: Mostly food. Most mothers would roast a chicken. But my mother had no time.

CP: So people would bid on this item?

RW: And if you were popular and good-looking and had a good personality, they would somehow bid. I had just candy and I outbid all them gals.

CP: But nobody knew what was in the box?

RW: No. They were taking a chance. And to them, a ten-dollar bid was very good. So, then, as I grew older, when I became about fifteen, sixteen, why, it became as high as twenty. And, of course, then I started to blossom out and I was a good dancer 'cause I loved dancing. So that helped.

CP: How would these functions start? What would be like the program for the evening?

RW: Well, just the music would start. They would get a meeting. The Ilocanos were famous for this. They would form a club like, the bachelors. They had a president and the treasurer and the secretary, and all that. Of course, I didn't know any better then, but now I realize that each one had their own place. In between time, we'd have a rest period, and they would have a little program like who was talented enough to sing. And of course, I always sang.

FA: She was good, too.

RW: I always sang, so that was our kind of intermission time. And that was about it. No big deal. But I thought that's the way it was. The girls were shy. I didn't feel shy. I loved to sing, so I thought I'd sing. Now, remember, where we lived, we sang with freedom. Nobody can . . .

FA: Tell us to shut up.

RW: No one can tell us whether it was good or bad or be quiet. We did what we wanted to. We expressed our voice. So this, I think, is a good training for any singer. So to me, I thought I was doing well. When they said, "Rose, can you sing?"

"Oh, sure. What you want me to sing?"

"Whatever you can."

So, I'd sing.

CP: Did all the women have to do something, perform in some way?

RW: Whoever is talented. There was lot of them, shy, very shy. They still do, today. I read about the modern times, now, they do have. They go through agony before they start with whatever they do, but I wasn't. I was gifted. How nice. But today, I don't think I can do that. I know better now, I guess. (Laughs)

CP: What kind of group, music, did they have?

RW: Whoever, my gosh. Now, when I think of it, to me, those days was beautiful. To me, music was music. And you know, those Filipinos, they fly-by-night, learning by themselves. And they played whatever. And when she and I imitate, we just sit down and just laugh today when we listen to the way they played it. It was real, in a way, corny, and yet pathetic. But yet, it was there.

FA: They kept the beat, too.

RW: They kept the beat. And before they would start, their feet would hit the beat and then they would start there. And it went ta-tan, ta-tan, ta-tan, ta-tan--that kind of beat, you know. (Laughs) So, that was hilarious. When I think, to me, then, it was beautiful because that was music. We didn't have anything. We were living like in the wilderness. So, that was beautiful for us.

CP: Was it like string band?

RW: They had. Certain places had string band. That was beautiful. But where they had the blowing instruments, that's the one, at that time, to me it was beautiful. But now, when I think about it, it was hilarious. 'Cause I know they never learned. I can blow anything as long as you follow the notes. But they did improvise. They did their own thing.

CP: Did they play Filipino songs mostly?

RW: Some, some. Mostly popular music.

CP: American songs?

RW: Yes. Because you hear them, I guess, all over. I don't know how it started, the popular. Well, it started probably with Filipinos, I'm sure. I'm too young to know about that. But I'm sure it was mostly a string band with Filipinos. Because when I hear my father mention about the dance band they had, it was just the family that did it. They had the brother did this with the guitar and the string and then a drum, I think, or was it just a bass. And they did fine.

FA: Mm hmm. Like a combo.

RW: Yeah. So that was their string. A whole family would do it, and away they went home, and that's how they did. And I guess, they figure, "Oh, let's take up music," I'm sure.

CP: When somebody would bid on your box and then you'd win or they would win, they'd bid against each other, right?

RW: Yes, of course.

CP: And then, if they won or if they got the highest bid, then what would you be obligated to do?

RW: Just dance with the person.

CP: Just one time or for the rest of the night?

RW: For just one time. It's nothing at all like today. That was a prize. To me, I rated. I won many times. From one box of candy.

CP: But if you won, did you feel like you were obligated to spend more time with him at this particular function?

RW: No. They were very nice gentlemen, like I say. You don't find them today. I felt good when I won. But I didn't realize there was so much jealousy at that time. The girls didn't like the idea. Look how much their mother baked the chicken. So you see how interesting my life was actually? But it wasn't to me.

CP: Every single person, they would bid on?

RW: Yes. Whoever was the highest that night was actually the winner.

CP: So then, at the end, would they have a little ceremony or something?

RW: No, they would bring home the box. No, this was part of the program that night. And the highlight of the night, who had the highest bid. And I always came a winner. So, I enjoyed that.

CP: Let's say, it was your turn and you had like a few gentlemen bidding on you, right?

RW: Right.

CP: If one of them won, then right then and there, you'd dance with him?

RW: If need be, he would come and ask. But see, they would continue having bidding. So, oh, that would be fun because everybody would be clapping, and everybody would be howling and yelling and say, "Don't be afraid! Bid some more." And that was it.

CP: I was trying to figure out how this whole thing got started.

RW: I truly have no idea.

FA: I guess to keep, you know, Spanish-speaking Spanish people . . .

RW: I have no idea. This is, I think, the Spanish style.

FA: Spanish people are very festive people. And maybe they brought it with them to. . . .

RW: Can we stop now?

CP: Sure.

RW: I'm going to prepare lunch.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 15-51-2-87

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Rosalina Labrador Wagner (RW)

August 7, 1987

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Chris Planas (CP)

CP: This is an interview with Rose Wagner at her home in Honolulu on August 7, 1987. The interviewer's name is Chris Planas.

The last time I was here, we ended on the social boxes and what those were like. You were saying that they had those pretty frequently.

RW: That was the only entertainment we had.

CP: And you were mentioning the fact that you used to win a lot of those?

RW: Yeah, I was pretty lucky.

CP: Would there be some kind of special ceremony?

RW: No.

CP: If you won? I know I saw some pictures that you had.

RW: No, we all took pictures. In the end, we all would gather around. They took pictures, and that was about it. We called it a night. Our dance finished around eleven. And after that, either they go straight home or somebody may cook chicken. They cooked chicken in a pot, all cut up, or roast chicken, somebody's place, and they'd eat. Whoever was invited. Each individual. That's why it was called a partner dance. You had a partner and that partner would take you to the home with the chaperone and the family and they ate.

CP: Oh, really? Would the partner be the person who bid on your social box?

RW: Most likely.

CP: Oh, I see. So, let's say somebody would bid on your social box. And if they bid the highest, then you would invite them over to your house afterwards?

RW: No, no. Their house.

CP: Oh, their house?

RW: The bachelors' quarters.

CP: Oh, really? But then, somebody would go with you?

RW: One of my family. Because I was underage then. We did things when we were young. That's the reason why we were accompanied by our--one of the parent would go.

CP: And how old were you when you started?

RW: Most likely, thirteen, fourteen.

CP: And how old were you when you stopped finally?

RW: When I was sixteen or fifteen. Between that. Because I got married early. Right after that, I got married immediately.

CP: Oh, how old were you when you got married?

RW: Seventeen.

CP: And when you were married, was it to your present husband?

RW: My first and only. Forty-sixth year.

CP: Was that pretty common to get married that young?

RW: Of course. Some, younger yet, fourteen. I really didn't want to get married early, but I was like a prisoner. I had to be with my parents a lot. I had no activities that I could participate. I had to do exactly what they wanted me to do.

CP: Do you feel that you got married, in a way, to escape that?

RW: Most important. I felt guilty leaving my parents, but I had no choice. If I had wanted that life, I would endure, but I no longer can endure. But I didn't dare say this to my parents. And my married life, poor as I was, was the most happiest [from] the very beginning of my marriage. My husband and I both grew up together. We were both young. We love each other and we grew up together and raised our family together. So this was wonderful. I imagine my parents were in the same predicament from the Philippines and came here because I hear them talking about this incidence about why they made the trip here. But my reason was, I would much rather have a life of my own.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

CP: You said that you and your husband grew up together. Were you the

same age?

RW: He's two years older than I. But we went to the same school. We knew each other of course, but we never really knew each other until we got to be teenagers.

CP: And what's his name?

RW: His name is Barney Wagner. He's Chinese-Hawaiian-German. So that was a kind of shock for my parents. I was the last person they thought would get involved with a different nationality. I had common sense already. I knew that I wanted something different.

CP: Your husband, how was it that you got together? Did you go on dates?

RW: I had to sneak. Whenever I had dances, before the dance, I would make believe I'm going to the store and that's how we communicated. Then we wrote letters a lot. That's how he was courting me, letters. And when we went to movies, I'd give up movies, let my--of course, I had to bring all my sisters and brothers. When they went to the movies, I'd sneak out and meet him. So just before the movies, I'd pretend I'd be in the theater. But sometimes, somebody told my parents, and I got beat up. (Laughs)

CP: You were mentioning that you would meet him before the dances. What kind of dances would these be? High school dances?

RW: The same. No, I never went to a public dance outside of Filipino dances. They would not allow me. He was not a dancer, anyway. No, he would be in his car and I would be there just enough to embrace him and kiss him. That would make my day, night, whatever. (Laughs)

CP: You wouldn't be able to go to the dances with him, though?

RW: Oh, no! I'd get killed. I have my sister or my brothers. I always had a chaperone. I was never, never left alone. That was impossible, those days.

CP: These dances, where were they held at?

RW: In the community halls.

CP: Different ones or always one . . .

RW: Different ones in different communities. Like Līhu'e, as I had said yesterday. Līhu'e, Kōloa, Lāwa'i, Kalāheo. Even 'Ele'ele and in Makaweli all the way to Kekaha. They have those Filipino community halls. We made it. We went, rain or shine.

CP: How would you get there? Would your father drive you?

RW: Yes. Or by then, I drove. My father lied my age when I was thirteen. At that time, we could drive at the age of fifteen and have our license. But he took me to the license bureau and told them I was fifteen already. About one year after that, there was always jealousy, somebody turned me in and we had a big--not big case, but I was suspended. And somebody had said that I was underage, so.

CP: Your license was suspended?

RW: Taken away from me until about the following year when I was exactly fifteen. I was driving, actually, at the age of fourteen.

CP: You mentioned that you learned to drive for a certain reason.

RW: I had to. I found that the pig grass was heavier and heavier to bring home and drag. So one day when I saw the car parked out in the open, I tried. I was always observing what happened to their feet and their hands, so I moved the car by myself. And when I told my father I can drive, he couldn't believe it. In fact, he came running after me, yelling to stop. So, I told him I'll take the car with me so I can pick up more. And in the fields at those days, they never bothered us. We just drove because that was just a dirt road. I'd pack all my kid sisters and brothers and away we went with the car coming back in the evening with all the pig grass loaded to the top. I was pretty good driver, too.

CP: You mentioned something else, too, about helping your parents. They were making beer?

RW: Yes. We sure did. All I did was serve, and then write it down when they bought. In the evening, the menfolks from the camp--it was about a half a mile [away]. About, I'd say, every night, three or four would come and drink beer. I would serve and I charged them by the bottle.

CP: How old were you when that first started? Do you remember?

RW: Most likely thirteen. I was either thirteen, fourteen, in that age category. Lot of things were happening that my mother was making pretty good money selling cakes on weekends or some afternoons and then doing the beer in the evenings. And same time, picking up grass, too, and doing our regular chores.

CP: How did they make the beer?

RW: Oh, they had a big crock. They bought malt. And they had sugar and they would ferment that thing. And then there were times, certain time was bottling time, certain time was the washing of the bottles. They were those amber color soy, shoyu bottles.

CP: And you'd save [the bottles]?

RW: Oh, we collected in the rubbish dump. We went and collect and that's how we made. And one bottle, I think it was twenty-five cents--pretty big, I think almost a quart size or one pint size.

CP: This was during the days that liquor was illegal?

RW: Of course. [Actually, Prohibition had been lifted by this time; however, bootlegging has always been illegal.]

CP: How did your parents [learn] to make beer?

RW: That, I have no idea. I'm sure they were taught by some of their friends.

CP: Do you remember very many other people making liquor?

RW: Not really. But I knew some was selling the 'ōkolehao. My parents sold that, too. They sold it by the jigger. The small jigger was ten cents and the bigger jigger was twenty-five cents, so they made pretty good money.

CP: And they made that ['ōkolehao] also?

RW: No, no, no. They bought it from. . . . There was an old Japanese man. He was a contractor.

(Interview interrupted, then resumes.)

RW: He took care of the big [Waitā] Reservoir. I don't know how he made that 'ōkolehao. But my father would go there and buy about two gallons.

CP: You remember that Japanese man's name?

RW: No. But my father does. And he [i.e., the Japanese man] raised lot of chicken. And I know every time when my father came back [from the Japanese man's house], he was drunk. There were times when my father went with his horse to pick up these couple gallons and he couldn't get down from the horse because he was too drunk. And then, he'd just stay. My mother would be crying for him to get off the horse, but he's too drunk. So evidently, whoever he's buying from, that old man, he made my father drink so much that I don't know how he got back. But he got back.

CP: Your father, though, would you say he drank a lot?

RW: Not really. But he drank. He was a hardworking man.

CP: Now, you said you served beer after work to the workers . . .

RW: Evening time.

CP: Evening time?

RW: After they had their dinner. I'd say about 6:00, 6:30 because they got home about 4:00, 4:30, 5:00. After they ate, they would drink. And maybe they're lonely, too, they came to visit. And we'd sing.

CP: Who would sing? The children? Or you and your parents, too?

RW: No, my parents went to bed early or they were in the kitchen cleaning up. My guests [sang], the one that purchased the beer. And they were young men, then. Of course, they were about, I'd say, ten years older than I. But they were lonely men and whatever friendship we could offer, they enjoyed that. And plus, doing business with us, too. And I didn't think those things were illegal.

CP: Were they predominantly Filipinos?

RW: Yes. In fact, they were all Filipinos.

CP: And were they mostly bachelors?

RW: Yes. They were smart men, too. They knew how to sing. And we talked a lot. I don't know what, now, when I think about it, but I guess, small talk because I can't remember. If it was something spectacular, I would. But nothing, nothing. My life there was just a routine, day in and day out. Make money, be good, work, help out. That is how our life consisted. And don't make any harm for fear they're [parents] going to get deported or sent away. That was their big fear.

CP: Do you remember if some of these people talked about the Philippines?

RW: Oh, yes, of course. Some of them now, I can recall, were married, newly married. They came here really to earn money and then leave after several years, which afterwards, I know they did that. But of course, you know, they had taxi dancing and prostitution. It [i.e., taxi dancing] was legal because they had a place there that they went. So every payday, they'd flock to that place.

CP: Which place is this?

RW: They had in certain parts of Kōloa and certain parts of Kapa'a. The one in Kōloa, of course, that was illegal.

CP: Now, that was a house of prostitution or a taxi-dance hall?

RW: Oh, the taxi-dance hall was always held in--I was sure--in Kapa'a and in Waimea. And that was legal. But there were girls that would come in from Honolulu. And they were very attractive girls. They were of different nationality and Filipinos. They would enjoy for that weekend and go back. I'm sure they danced for a couple of weeks. And then, after [that] they enjoyed the chicken fight. During Sundays, they have the chicken fight, cockfighting. And

those girls enjoyed that. Not too very far from there, that legal prostitution place was open to the men.

CP: Now, these taxi-dance hall places, I guess they were like places where lot of the Filipino bachelors could go and just dance with these women.

RW: Yes. They had live orchestra, and they had the owners that ran the place. I've never seen it.

CP: Can you recall seeing some of these women?

RW: I had several good, good friends.

CP: Who were taxi dancers?

RW: Yes, yes. They would come from Honolulu. And I was always a friendly type person.

CP: How did you get to know them?

RW: Well, couple of them were my cousins. Not close cousins, but they were maybe the seventh removed, you know, that kind of cousins. But my mother knew them from the Philippines so they would introduce, and they'd come. We'd cook. Real Filipino hospitality. We'd get together and off they went again.

CP: Did you understand that they made good money from this?

RW: Yes. But I don't know if they made good money. That time, money is money to me. I'm sure, when they came back here [Honolulu], they were doing waitress work or whatever. Some went to school, maybe. The different nationality, well, they had different ideas about making money. They were working for their tuition money, but the Filipinos had to help their parents. They gave the money to the parents, most of the gals. Sometimes the parents would come with them. I don't think any one of them were aged over twenty. They were younger. I was sure they were in their mid- or late teens. You could, you know, always bluff your age. Those days, they never cared for birth certificates like they do now.

CP: What happened that you stopped [making and selling beer]?

RW: Oh, somebody turned us in and the detectives came. And luckily, I was not there. I was driving to the store--without license now--and I saw these three to four men came. They were of different nationalities and they came to our house, I thought, on business, but they came to see if they could find any beer. My father had a nice hiding place for that. And the funny part, when they came in the kitchen, one was leaning right next to a beer bottle that was half full that my father had just drank right after lunch. He thought it was soy sauce because it was one of those dark amber bottles. So there was no evidence, not one evidence. That was a

dud for them.

CP: Where did your father hide the bottles?

RW: There was a hole in the kitchen that he had made, a deep hole where the floor was the cover. So no way, even if you went underneath the house to locate, you can't because the cover was the floor. All you do was lift up the floor and there was the hole. But after they left, the bottles felt the heat and they began popping. So that was so unusual.

CP: The bottles [popped] as soon as they left?

RW: Yes. When the car reversed, and that was the most uncanny thing I can remember. The heat. They came in the middle of the day we were supposed to have removed that. And that's not a hot area because it's buried under the ground. But I don't know what happened, it started popping one after another. I'd say about a half a dozen bottles, not all of them. But it was uncanny. Right after they left. So we decided not to do that anymore. That was a very, very close call. My parents could have been deported.

CP: Oh, really?

RW: Of course, that's a felony. That comes under drug.

CP: So how many years were you able to sell beer before you stopped?

RW: Oh, I'd say a good two, three years. That was my job. I had a little book. And my parents, they did their thing. My father had to sleep early because he had to get up about three in the morning and feed the horses to get them started. The big [plantation] bosses would come about 5:30 to 6:00 [a.m.] and the horses would be saddled and ready to go. And of course, the work horse, they would take it to work to put whatever equipment on the horses.

CP: How much would you say in a month that you made off of the beer?

RW: That's the funny part. Could you figure out? Every night, I would make about two dollars or three dollars.

CP: So you figure, maybe [multiplied by] thirty or something like that.

RW: Yes. So that's big money for us, those days. Very big. And my father had pretty good pay because he was in charge of the stable. And my mother, that was the happiest moment in her life.

CP: Did you get paid for doing that kind of stuff?

RW: Never. I thought that was part of my being born.

CP: Did people ever come to pick up beer to take out with them? Or did you ever go and deliver?

RW: No, never. We never made big scales. Just enough for that kind of deal we had. So it wasn't a big scale. It was small, but in those days, that was big money for small people. Now, when I think about it, that was really chicken feed when you think about that kind of volume. But still, that's a felony. You were not allowed to do that. Plus, they were aliens. You're not to do that when you're in a country that you had just stayed.

CP: You were saying, talking about your mother again, that she used to go to the chicken fights, too?

RW: Every Saturday . . .

CP: Did you used to go with her?

RW: Oh, yes. And then when I got my license back, in fact I started when I was young. We went. I was her constant companion. I was exposed to the gamblers and that thing early in life. So I had it hard. They enjoyed that in a way because they made money. I've seen that police raid several times and I wasn't frightened because--I'd see them run, but I wasn't frightened because I was there with my parents and most of the ladies. Once I saw the cops kick all the peddlers' things that they were selling. Like some had mangoes and eggs, you know, hard-cooked eggs, their wares, whatever, and that mean old cop went and kicked it, and it went rolling all over the place. Even the men begged him not to do that, but he said, "You are trespassing." So this is how we were. We lived in fear, but yet we took a chance.

CP: And you were considered peddlers, too?

RW: Oh, of course, definitely. My mother hired drivers, but I was with her constantly. I was her companion almost daily. And then, weekends, we would go and venture our wares.

CP: What kind of drivers, when she hired drivers . . .

RW: Very nice bachelor men.

CP: And what would their job be?

RW: Just drive and help carry our things and put it there. Then he would go about his ways, gambling maybe or watching the cockfight or visiting. When it was time to go, he was there. And if need be, he had to go somewhere, he would ask my mother for permission if he could use the car and go, and away he went. Then he'd come at that certain time again when we were ready to leave. But they were nice faithful friends.

CP: Do you remember where these cockfights were held?

RW: Oh, yes. Everywhere, from Kekaha to Makaweli, Kapa'a, Kīlauea, Kumukumu, Keālia, and Kapaia. Kapaia was the biggest. Then, of

course, they had in Kōloa. It wasn't a big one. But Kapaia had the biggest.

CP: Where did they have them in Kōloa?

RW: In the camp, Filipino Camp, Korean Camp. It's now the new housing area [i.e., Grove Farm subdivision].

CP: Would it be somebody's house or . . .

RW: Somebody's backyard. And nobody bothered. Sometimes, the police would raid. But just enough to say, "Better not do it today. I think the big man, the chief, is breathing down our neck." So, the following Sunday, they went back again and do their thing.

CP: And how many people, you think, would attend the ones in Kōloa, at a time?

RW: Oh, sometimes they'd have about 300.

CP: Really? In one person's backyard?

RW: Yes. Most time, I'd say about 200, the normal. But they would come [to] about 300 and as the time went, they got even more.

CP: Would it be all ages?

RW: Mostly the Filipino men, not all ages.

CP: There would be women there, too, though?

RW: Yeah. Few gambling women. Very few. I'd say just about a couple. And mostly men. But now, if I say now, it's entirely different, of course. Women can almost equalize the men today. In the mid-'70s and late '70s, they had a pretty big one in Kapa'a. And I saw that even different nationalities came. It's entirely different. This [previously] was for the Filipinos only. So I don't think the different nationalities were interested.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

RW: Now that I had gone back to school, you couldn't pay me to do those things, what I had done before. You could not pay me. But then, Florence, my younger sister, she had to tell my mother, "I do not want to do the things that Manang did."

CP: So, all the things that you had to do, like go and help them sell things and sell beer and . . .

RW: I hated it. I hated everything about that. But then, I thought that was the way you serve your parents 'cause day in and day out, they'll pound that on your head. "This is what we have to do. Your job is this. And don't you ever go out of line [or else] we're

going back to the Philippines."

CP: Did you see your other friends, you know, having an easier life and did you feel envious of them?

RW: Very. Very, very. I knew I could be like them. But to my mother, they would buy new car. And then, that's their reward. I could drive it whenever they told me. I could not drive their cars whenever I felt like, only when they send me on errands. In fact, till today, they won't let you drive the car unless necessary. They have always been like frugal type. And yet, they spent their money over nothing. We didn't have to have the new cars, but she wanted me to have new cars so that driving would be easier for me and her. It was always she and I till later on.

So when I got married, she was pretty heartbroken. But I had to do it. I had to start my life. At least I knew I was going to get away from that kind of life. I knew I had something else better than that kind of life. But to them, struggling was nothing, and to them, that's the way life is. And for a while, I thought that was how life was. Because all the bachelors would be going to work and the same routine, day in and day out, they came. My parents would adjust themselves--schedule themselves, I meant to say. Monday was a wash day, but we have to pick up coconuts. My brothers were put to pick up the firewood and the coconuts and those bamboo sticks so that my father could get them small so they can use that to poke that like a shish kebab? How you call that?

CP: Oh, right, right. Skewer.

RW: Yeah, skewer the cakes, the little round cakes that my mother would make. Consist of coconut, flour, and sugar, and deep fried. They skewered that. Kaskaron.

CP: Kaskaron, yeah.

RW: Yeah, so that was a must to pick, firewood for their cooking. Their coconut, which is during weekends I have to pick it up, load up. And then, the banana leaves. So that was a must for us. The younger ones now had to singe the leaves so that they'd be pliable enough to work on and they last much longer. And we were all--we had our own chores. So most parts, I remember. That was the main schedule. And then, the grating of the coconut. They wouldn't trust us grating because we would get hurt. So my father had to do that besides his work.

CP: What did he grate it with?

RW: A grater that he had made. But in the later years, of course, after, in the early seventies, I gave them an electric grater. Or was it later part of the sixties, I gave them an electric grater. And I could never find another one like that. And of course, they won't use those new food processors because anything that was

electrical, my mother would be frightened. So my father had to. Even the washing machine, the electric washing machine today, my mother is deathly scared of. Even that [electric] rice cooker, my mother is afraid. This is how illiterate she is. But she does not want you to think she is. She was very uncanny, she made lot of money for herself.

CP: What happened with this money?

RW: Well, my brothers started to get married, and [the money] helped out. Some went to that, and their cars, and their expense. And to them, if they made $300 put away, you know, that was big money, $300 a year, $400. But to me, that was small. I never did see them with a lot of money.

CP: It seems like they spent their money pretty freely while they made it. Is that true?

RW: Not really.

CP: But they bought new cars every other year or so.

RW: Yes, but it stopped right after the early sixties and that was it.

CP: And I guess they had to stop because they didn't have their children helping them out too much anymore?

RW: My bachelor brother helped a lot.

CP: Oh, really?

RW: He took all the bananas and everything. The coconut. So, it never stopped. She managed.

CP: Did she continue making baked goods?

RW: Continued, continued, continued.

CP: When did she finally stop?

RW: When she hardly could do anything. In the early eighties, that's when she had to stop because that was getting very, very dangerous. Lot of different nationalities and there were marijuana involved. And the gamblers, they had the syndicates already coming in.

CP: You mean, into the cockfights and stuff?

RW: Oh, yes. There were so many things that really, if they [kept] it going, I don't know what would have happened. But it had to stop.

CP: So up until the early eighties your mother would still go to the chicken fights and try and sell stuff?

RW: Yeah. Just about 1980. That was about the last time.

CP: She stopped because the climate became a little more dangerous.

RW: Yes. Not the climate. It was the law was coming in. She had good--how you call that kind people? The gamblers, the syndicate, she had. They were her friends. And I'm glad [she stopped]. And then, she took ill. My father, too. They enjoyed that life. After my father retired, he put in all his time and effort with her. The twosome. They went all over the island for that, but mostly in Kapa'a. They had that chicken fight. It was a very modern chicken cockfighting area, arena. And there were lot of different nationalities already coming in from different islands. They were importing lot of cocks. And it was getting out of hand. I don't know if somebody was getting the heat or what. I never did care anyway. I was glad my parents stopped.

CP: You said you got married when you were seventeen?

RW: Yeah, seventeen.

CP: How long did you stay in Kōloa after that?

RW: I stayed only one month later. And then, I moved to Honolulu and been here since. But I always made it a point to go and visit them.

CP: Your husband, when you got married, how did his family . . .

RW: They disowned him because they did not like any Filipinos either. And my parents didn't like [non-Filipinos]. I liked anybody. To me, they were human beings. I knew better. To me, nationality was different name. To me, human beings were human beings. Who was better and who was not better, I knew the difference. To me, human being came first. But see, I grew up with lot of prejudice and lot of conflicts. I did not want to live like that. This is why, I'm glad I moved.

CP: Your husband was mixed. Were there very many other children that were mixed ethnicity?

RW: Yes, yes. And then, when of course, the war broke about a year after that, lot of people were marrying different nationalities. But few, very few of us broke the barrier.

CP: Why were people marrying different nationalities after the war started, you think?

RW: Because lot of soldiers came in. By the soldiers being present there, it gave them [Kōloa people] a different outlook in life, I'm sure. The younger ones, but not the older ones. Of course, still had prejudice. Till today, my mother is prejudiced of different nationality. She does not recognize too much my immediate family that's marrying different nationality. She prefers the ones that's

married to the pure Filipino. I think that's ridiculous. But that's the way they are. And then, sometimes it hurts because they throw it in our face. And we've been pretty successful. My marriage has been very successful. My sister's marriage and a lot of my friends that I've seen married to different nationality has been pretty successful. Like anything else, your marriage can end anytime, whether it's death or divorce. So, what's the difference? This is the way how they want life to be--one only.

CP: What was it that made you want to get married at that early an age?

RW: I did not want to get married. I wanted freedom. Freedom was my main goal in life. I wanted to go to school. I wanted to get out, but I just couldn't. It was a very--now, I think about it--prison living.

CP: Did your husband ask you to marry him?

RW: Oh, of course.

CP: Even though his parents disowned him?

RW: Yeah.

CP: Where did you get married?

RW: Oh, right there in Līhu'e.

CP: Was it a religious wedding?

RW: A Hawaiian minister married us. And we had my parents' blessing. They couldn't do anything but accept. But my in-laws didn't attend because they were very angry at my husband. But you know, love is greater than anything else. Regardless, if you are stone broke or how, you can endure, so. Proven facts, forty-six years, no regrets. I learned a lot.

CP: After you got married, where did you stay?

RW: Oh, we stayed in A'akukui. There's no longer a place. It's just a cane field now. It was a small area, and my husband was some kind of helper with a truck in the plantation. And we just couldn't see ourselves in that kind of life. We spend more on food than what he was earning. So that wasn't. . . . He saw his cousin working aboard the ship. And he had suggested he go to Honolulu and work, so the very next boat that came in, he left. I stayed back until he found a place. And we've been here since.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

CP: You were fairly young when you got married. I remember your mother saying that there was this woman that used to watch after the girls in those days?

RW: She was the probation officer.

CP: How was it that you folks got to know her?

RW: Not know her. She was sent to my house because someone had turned me in to some authority [who] misunderstood the dancing that I was attending--you know, the partner dance during weekend? Well, somebody said I was taxi dancing. So she wanted to know if I was involved with men. So who and who went, they hauled us. There were three of us in that immediate camp where I was living. I was living half a mile from that camp. We were told to go to the doctor and have ourselves examined. How embarrassing. We were virgins. We were very proud we were virgins. But [this woman], she was an ugly woman, but she did her job. She wanted to know if we were doing something against, you know, like sexy sixteen. And of course not. We had pride. We were brought up like that. But we went, and the doctor said we were good, clean. We were virgins.

This is the thing that I could not forget. But like I say, it's the gossiping and hearsay that can lead you into lot of trouble. This is what I cannot forget. Had I been just an ordinary child, don't attend those things, this wouldn't have happened. But like I say, I shrug it off like an experience in life. I experienced life very, very early, as far back as I can remember. And I never cried a lot, like the kids do today. I thought that was how life was. How wrong.

CP: Do you think people turned you in that time because they were jealous of you?

RW: I knew who they were. And they got punished. That's the one that was running the prostitution illegally.

CP: Oh. Why would they turn you in?

RW: Jealousy. I used to baby-sit for them. And I could see everything what was going on, but I was too naive. I didn't know what was going on. I could hear them in the next room, but I thought that was some kind of party.

CP: Where was this house?

RW: Where the [Kaua'i] Mortuary is located now.

CP: Oh, right, right.

RW: The funeral parlor.

CP: And it was a regular residence?

RW: Yes. He was pretending he was a car salesman.

CP: Was this a local man?

RW: No, no, no. He was from the Philippines. But he had come here earlier and he was a car salesman. And he wore a tie, and white shirt, and regular pants. And he thought he was---you know, he pretended to be rich. And of course, they were handling big bucks. I could see the money coming in. She had a trunk and went in the room when she had to do the change. Well, at that time, I didn't know that was going on. Then, how crude, that blonde lady had a bucket with Lysol, so every time she finished, she would wash herself with that, and then the next man came in. Then when the water was unbearable, she would just dump it behind the window.

CP: How many women were there?

RW: As far as I can [remember], she was one---they were one, one at a time. But they came every month for a good two, three weeks.

CP: And she had children?

RW: Yeah, she had two. And I took care of one. We were not allowed to go to that room, but I could hear. I could see them coming. And he would pretend to show them. He had several cars parked in front of his house, and he would pretend. . . . And now when I think about it, my God, right under my nose, they were doing things. They had lot of money. Hey, money was going--and $100 was, I can't believe it. And at that time, you know, where they had the prostitution house, I usually was so curious, I'd ask how much you pay, and they said anywhere from $2.50 to $5.00. And you know how Filipino men [were]. As a whole, one that cannot hold. They have strong--I can't say. Emotional type, sensitive, so they would ejaculate early. And that's how they made their bucks fast.

CP: Oh, so [there] would be a fast [turnover].

RW: Premature ejaculation when they get no women around them. So, they made their bucks. So now when I think about that, I say, "Gee, here I was, a young, young kid." Didn't know, but I know that now, when I think about it. Flashback, you know, lot of things. And then, you tell yourself, "I should have known better." But they were the one couldn't see me happy. I was just trying to help my mother. And I always had the kids with me. I took them all over with me, and so I eased my mother's workload and made her happy.

CP: This place, were mostly Filipino men went or all kinds?

RW: No, just Filipino men, and only Ilocanos.

CP: Oh, how come?

RW: I guess they were the suckers. I guess. Most Visayans, they were

married. Most of the Visayan men. And then, too, who knows? Maybe at night, they went. But the ones that I saw were Ilocanos.

CP: And they're mostly bachelors?

RW: Oh, yes. In their very prime year where they needed women. So, naturally, they were willing to pay.

CP: Did you ever feel somewhat ashamed or embarrassed?

RW: At that time, no, I didn't. I thought that was how life was. But when I think about it now, I am so embarrassed I could die, even. But, well, when you look at it in another way, it's one of your experience. I've had so many experience in my life, things that I have never. . . . Kids today have no idea. So, it's interesting to recall all these things.

CP: I guess I was just asking 'cause, you know, there are these stereotypes of Filipinos, you know, from the plantation days.

RW: This is now, this is now. But my sister [FA], as she was growing, she was a stereotype. She just didn't want to get involved. So you see how early she was stereotyped. She will not sell cake and she will not go, and she's not going. That's the way she said. She don't want to do what Manang did. I was not embarrassed because I thought that I'm giving all of me to my parents. Never mind about me, my feelings. But now, when I think about it, what an experience. And I could really sit down and cry and say, "My God, what. . . . " Can you imagine going through all that and not even knowing? That's the beautiful part of it because otherwise, I would rebel, had I known better. And maybe I'd turn them in, myself. But I was deathly scared of policemen and all those kind of people, you know. But like I said, this is how life was for me and I thought that's the way how life was. No back talk, you do as you're told. Can you imagine, Chris, if you lived like that? What would you say?

END OF INTERVIEW

KŌLOA: An Oral History of a Kaua'i Community

VOLUME I

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